inclusive cities CANADA

Meeting the Civic Challenges of Social Inclusion:

Cross-Canada Findings and Priorities for Action

DRAFT REPORT
Prepared for the national symposium on
Building a New Canada:
Meeting the Civic Challenges of Social Inclusion

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www.inclusivecities.ca

ABOUT INCLUSIVE CITIES CANADA

Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative was established in 2003 as a partnership of five social planning organizations. The Initiative begins with the understanding that all members of the community potentially gain from social inclusion – those who are vulnerable for reasons of poverty, racism or fear of difference – as well as the broader community that benefits when every one is able to participate as a valued and contributing member. An inclusive community or city is one that provides opportunities for the optimal development of all children, youth and adults.

The goals of Inclusive Cities Canada (ICC) are to:

- Strengthen the civic capacity of cities to build inclusive communities in which all residents are valued and engaged
- Ensure that community voices of diversity are fully recognized as core voices of the new Canada
- Promote senior government investments in the social infrastructure of cities as essential to advancing social inclusion and a Canadian urban strategy
- Create opportunities for mutual learning on promising inclusive initiatives and practices across cities and urban regions

The inspiration for ICC grew out of previous work between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Laidlaw Foundation. In 2002, local soundings were held in 10 cities across Canada to provide community perspectives on social issues facing urban centres and the civic capacities required to address them. The resulting report[1] recommended a process for assessing and advancing the inclusiveness of cities and communities through the establishment of cross-Canada civic panels.

The five social planning partners are: Community Social Planning Council of Toronto; Community Development Halton; Edmonton Social Planning Council; Human Development Council of Saint John (NB); and Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia. Dr. Joey Edwardh, Executive Director of Community Development Halton, and Micheal Phair, Edmonton City Councillor, are the co-chairs of a national steering committee. Inclusive Cities Canada receives multi-year funding from Social Development Canada. Start-up funds were also received from the Laidlaw Foundation.

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[1] Clutterbuck, P. and M. Novick. 2003. Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies. Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3

Section 1 The Civic Foundations of Social Inclusion 4
- 1.1 The Importance of a Civic Focus and Social Inclusion 4
- 1.2 What Makes a City Inclusive: The Dimensions of Social Inclusion 5
- 1.3 Civic Inquiries into Social Inclusion 6

Section 2 Cross Canada Findings 8
- 2.1 Perceptions of Civic Inclusion 8
- 2.2 Interpreting Trends in the Community: Perception Ratings of Civic Inclusion 11
- 2.3 Emerging Civic Themes 14
- 2.4 Cross-Cutting Issues 25

Section 3 Building a New Canada: Challenges and Priorities 38
- 3.1 Context 38
- 3.2 Challenges 40
- 3.3 Priorities for Action 45

INTRODUCTION

In March 2005 *Inclusive Cities Canada* (ICC) released local reports in Burlington, Edmonton, Saint John, Toronto, and Vancouver/North Vancouver. The reports, *Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities,* assessed the state of social inclusion in those cities and identified needed policy and program changes. The research included about 1,250 people across the country who participated in focus groups and local soundings. Civic panels were established in all cities to guide the local research.

The work of the civic panels brought an innovative approach to policy development. Each panel was co-chaired by a senior municipal official and a senior community leader. Panel members were from diverse civic sectors and cultural backgrounds. They brought informed and committed perspectives to their recommendations. The panels demonstrated that civic leaders from different regions of Canada shared many common concerns, and proposed a wide range of complementary priorities in their reports.

This report, *Meeting the Civic Challenges of Social Inclusion: Cross-Canada Findings and Priorities for Action,* analyzes and synthesizes the local findings and recommendations. It is being released as a draft for presentation and comment at the national symposium on *Building a New Canada: Meeting the Civic Challenges of Social Inclusion,* November 27 and 28, 2005, in Gatineau, Quebec.

This national symposium is an occasion for local participants to begin a national dialogue across cities on the future of their communities and their country. This draft report contributes to the national dialogue. It frames the issues coming out of the local reports as four civic challenges for governments and communities: 1) make civic democracy work; 2) affirm urban diversity; 3) reduce disparities in living conditions; and 4) invest in social infrastructure. It identifies the missions and preliminary actions needed to address these challenges. It calls on symposium participants to work together to identify priorities for action at a civic, provincial and federal government level.

The final report will build on the perspectives and feedback from participants at the national symposium and subsequent public meetings. A final cross-Canada report will be released and posted on the Inclusive Cities Canada website early in 2006.

Section 1 The Civic Foundations of Social Inclusion

1.1 The Importance of a Civic Focus and Social Inclusion

A civic focus is a focus on cities, on citizenship and engagement, and on the importance of where people live.

Over the past decade, the public policy importance of cities has grown because:

- Cities are assuming a bigger role than ever before as a result of demographic changes, downloading of responsibilities by senior governments, and the effects of globalization;

- Cities play a vital role in economic prosperity and as centres of innovation, creativity, and culture;

- It is increasingly being recognized that, "for our country to work, our cities have to work". [2] Cities are "where the national interest is made real for people"[3].; where people from all backgrounds want to come to raise their families[4] - the 'social centres of national life';

It is for these reasons that the sustainability of cities has become a public policy focus in Canada and internationally. Furthermore, there is growing recognition that, for cities to be sustainable, they have to be inclusive. The Cities Alliance, an international initiative launched by the World Bank and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, expressed this challenge as follows:

> *The social and economic future of countries is increasingly being determined in their urban areas . . . Two alternative scenarios are emerging: one of cities characterized by increasing poverty, social exclusion and decline; the other of inclusive cities characterized by equitable and sustainable growth.*[5]

Cities are where children and adults first experience either exclusion or inclusion. Their well-being is, therefore, closely tied to where they live – the quality of their neighbourhoods and public services, and the social commons where they have the opportunity to share experiences and

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[2] A. Orloff (2005) in "Measuring Up: A 2020 Vision for Inclusive Cities". www.philia.ca/cms_en/page1321.cfm

[3] Minister John Godfrey, as quoted by A. Orloff (2005)

[4] Marvyn Novick (1997), as quoted in C. Freiler (2004), "Why Strong Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy and Practice". www.strongneighbourhoods.ca.

[5] The Cities Alliance. "City Development Strategies: The Cities Alliance Perspective," [undated] "

interact. It is also in cities that the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings are most evident.

1.2 What Makes a City Inclusive: The Civic Dimensions of Social Inclusion

Inclusive cities contribute to the quality of life of individuals and improve the health of the population by reducing social and economic distances between people; valuing diversity and recognizing people's lived experiences; and ensuring that all members of the community participate as equally valued and respected citizens.

Based on previous research, a review of Canadian and international literature, and ongoing dialogues, Inclusive Cities Canada identified five civic dimensions of social inclusion. An inclusive city, therefore, depends on the following:

1. *Commitment to Diversity*

   The adoption and implementation of policies, plans and concrete actions by key public institutions that provide valued recognition to individuals and groups and reflect and respond to the full diversity of the population.

2. *Opportunities for Human Development*

   A focus on the development of talents, skills and capacities of everyone from early childhood through the transition years into and including adulthood.

3. *Quality of Civic Engagement*

   Strategies and actions to promote participation of individuals and groups in the full range of civic and community life to enhance social interaction, harmonious neighbourhoods and active citizenship.

4. *Cohesiveness of Living Conditions*.
   Provisions for personal and family security (food/nutrition, income and employment, housing, community safety) that minimize disparities in community living conditions within the population.

5. *Adequacy of Community Services*.

   A well-coordinated system of public and community support services connected to strong networks of informal and personal support to address the diverse circumstances of vulnerable people.

These dimensions became the basis for research conducted by the local ICC partners to explore people's perceptions of their city's 'inclusivity'. Community

focus groups, local soundings, feedback forums and electronic surveys were used in different ways by local partners to examine the level of inclusion in key areas such as: public education, recreation, transportation, policing and justice, local government, early childhood development, and community safety.

1.3 Civic Inquiries into Social Inclusion

The civic panels in the partner cities guided and oversaw a civic inquiry [6] process that followed a four-stage sequence of activities: community focus groups; research; analysis; and reporting

The focus of the inquiry was on a set of *common* areas relevant to social infrastructure across Canada that builds and sustains inclusive urban communities. The common areas of inquiry shown in the following chart, organized by inclusion dimension:

Dimensions of Inclusion	Cross-Canada Common Areas of Inquiry		
Diversity	Local Governance	Publicly Funded Education	Policing & Justice System
Human Development	Early Childhood Education	Publicly Funded Education	Recreation/Arts Culture
Civic Engagement	Local Governance	Public Spaces	Community Capacities
Living Conditions	Income & Employment	Housing	Community Safety
Community Services	*Health*	Crisis Services	Transportation & Mobility

Civic panels was organized and conduct a minimum of two community focus groups of about 10 to 15 participants in size for each of the five dimensions of

[6] The inquiries are also sometimes called civic "audits". The term 'inquiries" is used here to avoid confusion with financial audits.

inclusion. Each focus group covered the three common areas of inquiry for the inclusion dimension on which it focused.

Focus group participants were invited according to their relevant civic and/or community experience on the issues identified for application of the particular dimension of inclusion (e.g. invitation to a group of parents, students, teachers, and principals to address the “education” priority using the inclusion lens of “human development”). Stakeholders with both direct lived experience on the issues and/or a broader understanding and appreciation of the issue were invited to participate. The intent of community focus groups was to generate perspectives based on the experience of the ground level of community stakeholders.

The ICC partners also conducted several local soundings with small groups reflecting certain perspectives felt relevant to the issues at hand (e.g. youth, people with disabilities, immigrants, etc.)

The ICC National Resource Team (Peter Clutterbuck, Christa Freiler, and Marvyn Novick) designed and tested a common structure and format for the three-hour focus group sessions. The process provided opportunity for both individual and collective input into identifying the strengths and weakness of local social infrastructure in building and sustaining inclusive communities. It also allowed focus group participants to identify what positive changes are possible at the level of “policy frameworks, systems capacities, and community practices” to create and sustain urban social infrastructure for an inclusive city. A recorder used a prepared template to document each focus group discussion.

The partners researched issues arising from community focus group discussions both to complement focus group perspectives and to explore the potential of areas for future study suggested in focus groups. Site Coordinators also interviewed sector experts as key informants on issues identified in focus groups.

A draft report was made available to community focus group and local sounding participants and a general community invitation was issued for a feedback session allowing comment and further suggestions for inclusion in the final local report. Each local civic panel approved the final local report for public release.

Section 2 Cross-Canada Findings

This section of the report will review the findings from the community focus group sessions in the participating[7] cities.

- Section 2.1 quickly summarizes how focus group participant responses on the inclusiveness of their cities and communities were quantified for the purpose of comparing perceived strengths and weaknesses across the five inclusion dimensions. This section then present in both graphic and tabular formats the focus group participants' perceptions on the degree of inclusiveness in the areas of study. The graph portrays these "inclusion ratings" for all focus group participants as a "Cross-Canada" group as well as for each city.
- Section 2.2 offers an interpretation of the trends suggested in this overview of the participants' perceptions of inclusion and argues for the usefulness of inclusion as a normative concept in terms of constantly setting higher benchmarks for development and improvement.
- Section 2.3 reports the major themes by city emerging from community focus group discussions organized by the five inclusion dimensions.
- Section 2.4 pulls out twelve inclusion issues that cut across many of the cities and inform an inclusion agenda for our urban communities in Canada.

2.1 Cross-Canada Findings: Perceptions of Civic Inclusion

Rating community participants' perceptions

Focus group participants were presented individually with a set of statements, which were benchmarks of an inclusive community (i.e. high standards). For example, in community focus groups on the inclusion dimension of "Human Development", one of the benchmark indicators for the study area of "Publicly Funded Education" was: "*In general, students in the local education system get the personal attention and instruction necessary to fully develop their individual talents and abilities.*" Altogether in each community focus group, participants were presented with twelve such "indicator" statements.[8] Without prior group discussion, participants were asked to mark their own degree of agreement or disagreement with each indicator statement.

After making their ratings, focus group participants handed in their completed sheets. Their response for each indicator was scored using the values shown below:

[7] Vancouver/North Vancouver, although separate cities, had a single civic panel.

[8] The inclusion indicator statements were developed by the ICC National Resource Team from reference to international research on indicators of inclusion.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
Value: -- 2	Value: -- 1	Value: + 1	Value: + 2	Value: 0

The results were tabulated and aggregated for the whole focus group and an "average rating" between –2 and +2 was calculated for each inclusion dimension and for each area of study within each inclusion dimension.[9] Altogether 439 focus group participants completed these "perception ratings" surveys in the participating cities.

Quick tabulations were done and presented on site for each focus group for the purpose of generating discussion about how well or how poorly the group perceptions suggested their communities and cities were doing on the inclusion dimensions. While the results are not a definitive or objective measure of inclusion for any of the participating cities, they offer an impressionistic assessment of local conditions from the perspective of knowledgeable participants active in civic and community affairs and with some recognized experience in the policy and support fields to which they were addressing themselves.

Cross-Canada and community inclusion perception ratings

Plotting participant perceptions on a graph as in Figure 1 shows that the range of the perception ratings varies across the cities. Some cities such as Vancouver/North Vancouver and Burlington chart in a higher range between +.25 and +.50 for several inclusion dimensions. For several cities, participant perception ratings on some inclusion dimensions show very low values. Toronto, Edmonton, and Saint John reach the depths of –1.25 to –1.40 in perception ratings for certain inclusion dimensions.

Although the individual city graphs show variation in rating values, there is a relatively consistent pattern in how participants from all communities rated the dimensions in relation to each other. The consolidation of all the participant ratings into the Cross-Canada Inclusion Perceptions in Figure 1 shows:

(a) Civic Engagement and Human Development have the top two highest inclusion ratings;[10]

[9] For example, the three areas of study for the inclusion dimension of "Human Development" are "Early Childhood Education", "Publicly Funded Education" and "recreation, Arts and Culture". There are four indicators on inclusive Human Development for each of these three areas of study.
[10] The pattern varies only for Saint John for which "Diversity" is second highest, but by the slightest of margins – the average rating for the Diversity inclusion dimension in Saint John being – 0.57 , while Human Development comes in at – 0.61 , a difference of only --.04.

(b) Diversity and Community Services are within --.02 of each other in the middle tier of the inclusion ratings; and
(c) Living Conditions has the lowest rating by far in all cities.

The most dramatic departure from the generally consistent pattern of ratings by dimension is the Diversity dimension as rated by the Toronto focus group participants. The Toronto average rating for Diversity is –1.18, which is more than twice as negative as the lowest average Diversity ratings in other cities – Saint John at --.57 and Edmonton at --.53. It may be that the particular indicator statements used to assess Diversity were not favourable to Toronto's performance in the experience of the focus group participants in that city.

There is no question, however, there is much complexity on the issue of diversity in the City of Toronto as reflected in a variety of social, economic, and cultural debates about inclusion and exclusion ranging from newcomers' experience with employment and settlement, to racial identity, to sexual orientation. Many participants in the Toronto focus groups are active in a number of these issues and bring a strongly critical advocacy perspective to the issue (Notably, Toronto focus group participants recorded the lowest average rating values of all cities on *all* five inclusion dimensions). Such high standards are good in terms of setting expectations for change in Canada's most diverse and largest city. In terms of the ICC Cross-Canada findings, however, the overall cross-community ranking of diversity is affected negatively by the Toronto rating results.

The table following displays the rank ordering for the five inclusion dimensions by city.

Cross-Canada Perceptions of Social Inclusion
Individual Rankings of Inclusion Dimensions by Participating Cities

Reported Levels of Inclusion	**ICC Participating Cities**				
	Vancouver/ North Vancouver	**Edmonton**	**Burlington**	**Toronto**	**Saint John**
Highest	Civic Engagement	Civic Engagement	Human Development	Human Development	Civic Engagement
Second Highest	Human Development	Human Development	Civic Engagement	Civic Engagement	*Diversity*

Middle	*Diversity*	*Diversity*	*Diversity*	Community Services	Human Development
Second Lowest	Community Services	Community Services	Community Services	*Diversity*	Community Services
Lowest	Living Conditions	Living Conditions	Living Conditions	Living Conditions	Living Conditions

2.2 Cross-Canada Findings: Interpreting Trends in the Community Perception Ratings of Civic Inclusion

Several interpretive comments about these findings are in order:

- Clearly, participants across all six communities share serious concern about fundamental issues of income, employment and housing, which make up the lowest rated inclusion dimension - Living Conditions. Decent and adequate Living Conditions for all would seem to be the foundational cornerstone of an inclusive community.

- The fourth place cross-Canada ranking for the Community Services dimension is also disconcerting. Only Toronto participants ranked Community Services higher (third ahead of Diversity). This low ranking is significant in light of the lower ranking for Living Conditions. When basic means of economic support are failing people, they generally turn to community service systems, which participants indicate are failing as well. Focus group discussion revealed that Community Services were not as inclusive as they need to be mostly because of lack of resources and ineffective planning and coordination.

- On the other hand, relatively high rankings across communities for the Civic Engagement and Human Development dimensions are encouraging signs. There was a strong sense among focus group participants that the community was motivated for greater civic participation in local governance and that there are some opportunities and openness to this both in government and in community. On the Human Development dimension, participants felt that the core of the public education system has held and is highly valued, although it has been embattled for more

than a decade in many places and the learning needs of more vulnerable students and families have suffered (e.g. children needing special education services).

- Finally, inclusion ratings for any of the dimensions could have ranged from values as low as –2.00 to as high as +2.00. What is the significance of the fact that only four inclusion ratings in two urban areas (North Vancouver/Vancouver and Burlington) achieve positive values in these results? As illustrated in Figure 1, the highest inclusion rating for all Cross-Canada focus group participants is only –0.26 for their perceptions about the inclusiveness of Civic Engagement in their communities. The significance of the relationship between positive and negative values in these inclusion ratings is discussed below.

Social inclusion is a normative, value-based concept. The indicator statements created for this research set high inclusion standards, which made it difficult for a focus group participant to give a "Strongly Agree" response (+2 value) unless she/he was confident that a consistently high standard of inclusion was being achieved and maintained. Notably, there were no average rating scores in the –1.5 to –2.0 area in any of the cities, which could be taken as an encouraging sign. The low inclusion ratings for the Living Conditions dimension, which rates perception on performance in income, housing and employment in our cities, are not surprising.

The advantage of this measure of community perceptions is that it can show where efforts might be concentrated for improvement in building an inclusive community and city. Such results can help set a benchmark for improvement, such as breaking the zero threshold in average ratings to move into the inclusion zone reflected by positive rating values; or, advancing higher into the inclusion zone toward +1.0 as a measure of an acceptable if not ideal inclusion standard, that ideal being reflected at the +2.0 rating level.

Reflection and action to advance toward and higher into the inclusion zone on any of these dimensions are important. Society is not static and changing conditions and dynamics always challenge us to assess, re-assess and adjust in order to maintain high standards of achievement. Satisfaction with minimally acceptable standards rather than always pushing toward the ideal and desirable state is shortsighted. The higher in the inclusion zone on any dimension that a community and city achieve, the more likely that inclusive policy and practice will be institutionalized and the more resistant they will be to erosion or displacement by other constraints on the system.

For example, the universal right to vote in our democratic society is so institutionalized that it is hard to believe that less than a century ago the women's suffrage movement had to fight to eliminate the exclusion of women from the franchise. The current institutionalized floor for the right to vote, however,

presents new possibilities and debates about inclusion and the vote, such as whether to lower the voting age; or, extending the vote in municipal elections to non-citizens who are local residents. Both practices are recommended in the Toronto ICC Report and would introduce the notion of recognizing "civic citizenship" as distinct from, but in no way inconsistent or interfering with, the rights and privileges of national citizenship. Basing the local franchise on municipal residency would not in any way affect the voting rights and provisions of national citizenship for which the Canadian polity currently sets reasonable standards beyond just residency.

Some suggested then and affirm even more strongly now that tolerance or mere acceptance is an inadequate and still devaluing response to diversity. *Respect* for diversity is the more appropriate norm and this would be reflected in more than just legal protections, but in other ways such as in our education systems for cultivating the next generation of citizens and leaders. This approach has become more practiced in the last two decades, especially as our society becomes more racially and culturally diverse and our awareness heightens about the need to protect the rights and interests of other groups such as disabled people, the Aboriginal community, and people of varying sexual orientations.

Still others contend that *tolerating* and *respecting* diversity are relatively passive norms or responses. Actively *valuing* diversity is necessary to finally overcome classism, racism, and the overt and subtle exclusion of many other people who are perceived as different from the mainstream. *Valuing* diversity for its contribution socially, economically and culturally to the community and society makes the issue of systemic and institutional change a matter of benefit to everyone, not just people seen as part of a minority group. This way of understanding diversity is many times more advanced than tolerance or protection of individual rights, as important as these minimal standards remain.

Indicator statements on the degree of inclusiveness on the Diversity dimension of a city can be created to determine whether respondents see *tolerance* and *acceptance* for diversity in their community or not; or whether they can see respect or not; or whether they see evidence of positively *valuing* and *embracing* diversity for its wide community benefit; or whether they can even see how diversity is being *incorporated* or *institutionalized* in civic systems, structures and processes. Each level is a higher standard and expectation and each is harder to realize and to sustain, but that is the challenge of using an inclusion framework.

Using a social inclusion framework and developing audit tools such as the ICC indicators and dimension ratings can serve to motivate and encourage both our political and community leadership to strive more effectively together to build inclusive cities and communities.

2.3 Cross-Canada Findings: Emerging Civic Themes

This section presents the major emerging themes derived from the local research in the participating cities. These themes for each local partner are presented by inclusion dimension in the charts following. (The full reports can be downloaded from www.inclusivecities.ca under Publications and Perspectives).

Dimension: Civic Engagment (Local Governance, Public Spaces, and Community Capacities)

Cities	Major Themes
Saint John	• **Shaping a Democratic and Participatory Civic Culture.** As social and economic conditions in Saint John arouse greater public concern about the quality of life, there is a stronger sense in the community of the need to take more leadership in defining and determining the civic future of Saint John. The community and business sectors have begun to forge alliances to address issues such as poverty, employment, the stability of single parent families, and the housing crisis. Establishing a more active and engaged civic culture and voice vis-à-vis provincial government will require a joint commitment of leadership in both the community and the municipal sectors and efforts to raise the political consciousness and understanding of the public.
Burlington	• **Breaking Out of Public Complacency.** There is a complacency about civic affairs among Burlington residents not helped by concerns about how advisory groups are selected and function and the overriding power of the Ontario Municipal Board. The cost of transportation and inadequate routes and hours of service affect civic participation of some groups (youth, disabled, seniors) and the time pressures of daily life affect others. While municipal recognition of the community sector is improving, the sector's capacity to promote civic engagement is impeded by inadequate and unstable funding and the lack of recognition of the sector's role in supporting community advocacy.

Toronto	• **Redefining Local Democracy.** Toronto's amalgamation heightened sensitivity to the importance of local democracy and there is a strong sense that the current municipal administration will strengthen civic engagement, such as through the participatory budget process. The community sector is very active in giving voice to marginalized communities, but this is difficult in an environment where many smaller emerging groups representing newcomers to Toronto lack access to resources and where funders prefer to support direct services over community advocacy.
Edmonton	• **Recognizing the Validity of Citizen Voices.** In a political culture dominated by the province, active and meaningful citizen participation in the Edmonton civic decision-making process requires an explicit commitment at the political and administrative level. Structures and processes are needed to respect citizen input and to convert a technocratic and plutocratic decision-making process into a democratic and equitable one. The quality of civic engagement in Edmonton would be greatly enhanced by adequate, stable, core funding provisions to the community sector and civic support for the development of good community participatory process.
Vancouver/ North Vancouver	• **Engaging More Diverse Groups.** Youth, newcomers, and people with disabilities are recognized as prime groups for civic engagement strategies. While some progress has been made with youth, more joint and comprehensive planning between the municipal and community sectors and greater resource investments are required for a more inclusive involvement of the full diversity of the community.

Dimension: Human Development (Early Childhood Education, Publicly Funded Education, and Recreation, Arts and Culture)

Cities	Major Themes
Saint John	• **Under-funding Child Learning and Development.** Underpaid and overworked staff in schools and non-profit community childcare and arts/recreation programs make valiant efforts to support the growth and development of Saint John's children, but are struggling for lack of resources, especially for children with exceptional or special needs. Low-income families, especially single parents, are particularly disadvantaged in terms of user fees for many children's programs and the cost of transportation.
Burlington	• **Struggling to Respond to Diverse Needs with Inadequately Funded Systems.** Burlington has a good base of high quality local childcare, other children's programs, and community schools, but all are under-funded. There is concern about inadequate outreach and responsiveness to the needs of newcomer families. Low-income families and families with disabled children do not have equitable access to childcare. Funding cuts to social services have placed a heavier burden on public schools at the same time as the school system itself has experienced severe funding constraints. The major barriers to more inclusive arts and recreation programs are user fees and inadequate public transportation.

Toronto	• **Risking the Stability of High Quality Learning Systems.** Toronto boasts a high quality network of childcare programs and family resource centres with well-trained, culturally sensitive, but poorly paid staff. Lack of affordable childcare spaces is a major barrier to low-income families. A solid school system is suffering from under-funding and threatened by statutorily imposed policies (zero tolerance of the Ontario Safe Schools Act), which are resulting in inequitable disciplinary treatment within schools. The City and community groups offer a good range of arts, culture and recreation programs but their benefits are attenuated by user fees for many programs and lack of access to low cost public space (e.g. reduced access to community use of schools)
Edmonton	• **Threatening the Development of Educated and Well-Rounded Citizens.** The current non-system of early childhood education does not meet community needs, is highly fragmented and inadequately resourced, and exploits immigrant workers with low wages and no training. The quality of public education in Edmonton is fundamentally sound but at risk. Standardized testing, increasing class sizes, lack of teacher supports, and the loss of non-employment focused subjects (e.g. arts) undermine a more holistic and well-rounded educational experience, especially for students who are Aboriginal, immigrants, or disabled.
Vancouver/ North Vancouver	• **Maintaining Quality to Ensure Inclusiveness.** Early childhood education is high quality with good staff and works well in integrating disabled children. But more effective outreach to a more culturally diverse community is needed. The public school system is also high quality but both quality and inclusiveness are threatened by funding cuts. A “back to basics” educational philosophy is narrowing the focus of public education. Loss of quality in the public school system is also creating division in the community as better off families provide more out of their own means for their own children’s education. Vancouver and North Vancouver recognize recreation, arts and culture as important areas for municipal-community partnerships and building community leadership.

Dimension: Diversity (Local Governance, Publicly Funded Education, and Police/Justice System)

Cities	Major Themes
Saint John	• **Underlying Divisions Masked by Relatively Homogeneous Population.** Diversity is not high in the civic and public consciousness of Saint John, since it is a fairly homogeneous community. This homogeneity, however, masks some underlying social divisions between the mainstream and groups such as poor people and poor neighbourhoods, youth, racial and cultural minorities, and the gay and lesbian community. City Council does not reflect this growing diversity. Schools are beginning to show cultural diversity in curriculum and programming, but with few resources tend to "target the middle" of the student population. Police sensitivity to the needs of youth and the homosexual community has been uneven with hopeful signs of positive change.
Burlington	• **Responding to Demographic Changes.** The community is largely unaware that Burlington is not homogeneous and universally affluent. Much of the community is intolerant of diversity, particularly diversity of income. Racial and cultural diversity is also increasing rapidly putting pressure on support systems to adapt. Change is occurring among individual institutions and programs, but it is slow and uneven. Local education policy reflects sensitivity to diversity but there is little provincial support to assist with implementation. Similarly, with policing, there is still distance between policy at the senior command level and practice in the community, especially in relation to youth, racial minorities and newcomers.

Toronto	• **Shifting Diversity Policies into Community Practice.** Toronto has strong diversity policies in its major local authorities, the City, the School Boards, and the Police Services. Diversity policies, however, are not consistently put into practice: (a) Inadequate resources are invested by the City in implementation; (b) School funding cuts have resulted in uneven implementation of diversity practices plus the Province's "zero tolerance" policy unfairly affects certain groups of students; and (c) differential police treatment reported by members of the mainstream population and racial minorities suggests the community experiences "two realities of policing".
Edmonton	• **Adapting Key Institutions to Change.** Increasing immigration is creating more diversity in Edmonton, but the major issue is accommodating a growing urban Aboriginal population. Putting diversity policy into practice is inhibited by the municipal level's submission to a provincial political culture and the lack of capacity in terms of the City's revenue base. The public school system in Edmonton has weathered the privatization threat (charter schools) but is stretched to provide schooling that meets the full range of diversity in the population, especially when the dominant philosophy of education is for labour market preparation. Policing and justice systems also need to improve and could benefit from the restorative justice models of the Aboriginal community.
Vancouver/ North Vancouver	• **Promoting a Broad Approach to Diversity.** Immigration has heightened public sensitivity to growing ethno-racial/cultural diversity, especially Asian. The municipalities have adopted diversity and anti-racist initiatives and have also shown sensitivity to broader diversity issues (e.g. sexual orientation, disability). More proactive municipal outreach and support for more diverse participation in civic life are still needed. Under resource pressures, schools have also demonstrated good policy and practice on diversity, but there is concern about rising educational polarization between "rich" and "poor" schools in Vancouver. There are community issues with respect to the equitability and sensitivity of police relations with youth, racial minorities, and immigrants.

Dimension: Community Services (Health, Crisis Supports, and Mobility/Transportation)

Cities	Major Themes
Saint John	• **Caring Community But Fragile and Fragmented Support Base.** The community sector in Saint John is performing admirably in responding to the health and social support needs of disadvantaged parts of the population. The service base is, however, extremely fragile, stretched to the limits by service demands while heavily under-resourced. There is a strong sense that existing health and social support services are engaged in a holding action struggling to react to and stabilize crisis situations rather than proactively and strategically advancing a vision of an inclusive community for all. As well, there is poor coordination and integration across service sectors even with respect to information sharing and communications.
Burlington	• **Creating Adaptive, Responsive Supports for All Parts of the Community.** Burlington has a good local hospital but wait-times and unavailability of primary care physicians are major issues. More adaptive, responsive parts of the system need to be developed (e.g. mobile crisis response, community health centres, home care). There is concern about the emergence of a two-tier healthcare system. Emergency housing for youth, mentally ill, seniors, and people with developmental disabilities is wanting. Poverty and the lack of affordable and supportive housing put additional pressure on health and crisis services. Public transit is inadequate, both in routes and hours of service especially in the outer urban areas, and is not affordable to all groups. Access to services is compromised by inadequate public transit. Families with private transportation can access some specialized health services provided regionally out of nearby Hamilton.

Toronto	• **Building on a Highly Developed Health and Social Service Infrastructure.** Toronto has good hospitals and a strong network of community health centres that respond to the diverse needs of the population. There is concern, however, about preferential hospital treatment based on class, colour, gender, and immigrant status. Homecare and mental health services need further development. Crisis services are many, but not coordinated and must still build capacity to deliver multi-lingual, culturally sensitive supports. Many groups do not consider the emergency shelter system to be safe. Public transit has deteriorated in quality over the years and has become unaffordable for many. There have been some improvements made in public transit for seniors and people with disabilities.
Edmonton	• **Introducing Cultural Sensitivity into Existing Service Systems.** The acute care hospital system is good in Edmonton, although there is growing concern about the quality of care and whether all groups get equitable treatment in the healthcare system. Privatization of healthcare is a raging debate in Alberta. The increasing diversity of Edmonton is pointing to the need for more culturally sensitive healthcare models. Although community groups collaborate to provide some good models of crisis response, the overall crisis response system is not adequately resourced and coordinated. Culturally sensitive crisis response services are beginning but are not yet recognized as an essential part of the community service support system. Public transit is not a City or provincial priority, although the City does provide special transportation supports to people with disabilities.

Vancouver/ North Vancouver	• **Improving Coordination and Responsiveness to Newcomers' Needs in Service Systems.** Three major challenges facing health care in both cities are: (a) more effective coordination of health services; (b) more capacity to respond to the health care needs of an increasingly diverse population; and (c) a more preventative rather than crisis response approach to health care. Both cities need more adequate crisis supports, more culturally sensitive crisis services. The issue of developing a more effective and coordinated crisis support system is highlighted for Vancouver. Affordability is a concern with respect to transit in both cities, but is particularly important in the larger City of Vancouver.

Dimension: Living Conditions (Income/Employment, Housing, and Community Safety)

Cities	Major Themes
Saint John	• **Overcoming the "Quiet Discrimination" of Marginalized Community Members.** Although there are many good community initiatives to support low-income people, especially single parent families, that include the support of the business community, an underlying stereotype persists about unemployed and under-employed people in Saint John. This extends to the labeling of certain "poor neighbourhoods" where low-income people are concentrated. High poverty levels, low social assistance rates, rising rents, old, poor quality housing stock, all combine to create a crisis in affordable and decent housing in Saint John, especially for seniors, youth and single mothers. There is a growing recognition of the emerging housing crisis as private sector landlords start to educate themselves about the situation and explore ways to work with renters and governments to improve it.

Burlington	• **Dealing with the Reality of "Two Burlingtons".** Burlington is an affluent community in which there is a charitable orientation to those viewed as the "deserving poor" (some seniors, people with disabilities) but less awareness of, and willingness to provide services for others, such as single parents and young people on Ontario Works. There is concern that this "other Burlington" is growing terms of homelessness and food bank usage. Inadequate affordable, accessible and supportive housing is causing some people on lower incomes, with disabilities or special needs to move out of the City. There are concerns about a trend developing toward the racialization of poverty.
Toronto	• **Sharing the Prosperity with Vulnerable Groups.** Not all have shared in Toronto's economic prosperity over the years, resulting in high unemployment and poverty among certain groups, including well-educated and highly skilled immigrants, poorly educated youth without family supports, people with disabilities, the urban Aboriginal community, young low-income families with children, and elderly single women. Lack of recognition of the credentials and experience of newcomers is a major employment issue in Toronto. Although Toronto is still a City of mixed neighbourhoods for the most part, inadequate and unaffordable housing is a major barrier to inclusion for many, leaving large numbers on the street and in public shelters. Crime rates show Toronto is a very safe community, but public perceptions on community safety vary, and some neighbourhoods feel unfairly stigmatized by the media as high crime areas.

Edmonton	• **Distinguishing the "Deserving" from the "Undeserving" Urban Poor.** Very negative public and political attitudes towards people living in poverty are a major barrier to inclusion for welfare recipients, chronically unemployed people, newcomers, and Aboriginals. Mother-led single parent families are accorded slightly more consideration, but still not full respect and dignity. These attitudes translate into inadequate policies and programs for the provision of decent income supports and employment opportunities. Affordable housing is a growing problem as housing supply is pretty much being left to the private sector, which is only meeting the demand of the high end housing market. There is some public and political support for supportive housing options for seniors and people with disabilities. There is not a shared sense of community belonging among all groups. Certain groups report differential treatment by police and other civic authorities based on where they live (inner city), their age, their income level, their non-white or non-Euro-Canadian identification.
Vancouver/ North Vancouver	• **Engaging More Diverse Groups.** There is a strong recognition of the wasted human potential and loss of economic productivity resulting from barriers to the labour market facing certain parts of the Vancouver and North Vancouver population, such as Aboriginals, immigrants, people of colour and youth. A combination of better economic and labour market planning, cross-cultural education and training, and removal of the discriminatory and regulatory barriers to gainful employment for skilled newcomers would significantly improve inclusion in income and employment. The availability of affordable housing is a major issue in both communities especially for seniors on fixed incomes, youth, people with disabilities and urban Aboriginals, but including parts of the middle class also struggling with the high housing costs. In both Cities, there are clearly identified neighbourhoods stigmatized as not good or desirable places to live and as high crime communities. Certain identified groups in both Cities have higher safety concerns than the general population, which affects their quality of life.

2.4 Cross-Canada Findings: Cross-Cutting Issues

While the preceding identifies major themes emerging in each of the participating communities in the ICC, the research also points to inclusion issues that cut across communities as far apart geographically as Saint John in New Brunswick and Vancouver/North Vancouver in British Columbia. This section summarizes some of these cross-cutting issues relevant to building inclusive urban communities in Canada.

Intensifying and Converging Demographic Challenges

"We live in the same house, but we haven't been in the same room for some time." (North Vancouver Participant - Squamish Indian Reserve)

"The government should be using immigrants to increase the richness of the country, not to increase poverty ". (Burlington participant)

"The breakfast club is promoted as if you are having a busy morning, not just for poorer kids. Kids get the message that everyone is OK."
(Saint John participants)

"Why do we celebrate differences instead of similarities? So many times we look for differences; we need to look for similarities and ways to connect. We need to have both. Celebrate both similarities and appreciate the richness of the differences." (Edmonton participant)

"I found that we all have the same problems, just in different languages."
(Toronto participant)

Demographically, the participating ICC communities appear to present a study in contrasts, ranging from the tremendous and increasing racial and cultural diversity of Toronto and Vancouver/North Vancouver to the relatively homogeneous populations of Burlington and Saint John, with Edmonton somewhere in between. Actually, all five urban areas reflect the face of a rapidly changing urban Canada in which diversity is taking many shapes and forms. Burlington, historically a relatively homogeneous and affluent community, is experiencing growing demographic change with both more culturally and racially diverse settlement and concerns about an increasing low-income population. Saint John is also struggling with responding to the needs of new racial and cultural minorities as well as to the voices of historically marginalized populations such as the gay and lesbian community, seniors and people with disabilities. Edmonton is challenged to include in its economic prosperity not only a growing immigrant population, but also the Aboriginal migration from rural communities into the city.

Diversity in Canada is intensifying in many ways that reflect cultural and identity variation, structural disparities in access to resources (e.g. poverty and homelessness), and historical exclusion (e.g. Aboriginal, disabled, gay and lesbian communities). This intensifying form of diversity is also converging primarily on Canada's urban communities. The complexity of the diversity confronting urban communities demands more flexible and adaptive policy and support frameworks from provincial and federal governments. "One size fits all" does not accommodate the variety and degree of diversity with which urban communities are contending. Further, uniform, standard, and rigid policy frameworks will impede the capacity of municipalities and their communities not only to accommodate intensifying and converging urban diversity but also to benefit from the social, economic, and cultural contributions to civic and community life that such diversity offers.

Good Governance

"There is something wrong with a city of 150,000 people having only seven people representing you, and this adds to the apathy that is already there." (Burlington participant)

"All levels of government have gotten way too afraid of people. They do too much in the back room. They need to make decisions openly so people know where government stands, instead of trying to hide behind so many layers." (Saint John participant)

" It should not be so hard for people to be heard [at City Council]. It is very skewed to developers and lawyers to be heard. It is definitely not an inclusive process." (Edmonton participant)

"Many things that are really impacting people's lives are happening at the local level – local governments are trying to respond to concerns people have despite not having the mandate." (North Vancouver participant)

The municipal level of government has traditionally been the "poor cousin" of Canadian federalism. Yet, municipalities increasingly find themselves dealing with the impact of senior government policy decisions at the local level. As a result, pressure is mounting to provide more resources to accompany the greater responsibilities that have fallen to local government.

This presents the challenge of raising public and political consciousness about the important dual role of the municipal level of government as both a public service provider and a local democracy. Both have implications for creating

inclusive communities. As a public service provider, the municipality must ensure equity in its policy and practice. As a local democracy, it must ensure that all community members have access to the decision-making process on civic affairs.

It is important that good municipal governance not just be limited to structures and processes for executive level decision-making, but that it also "open-up" access to the planning and policy-making process, especially to historically marginalized groups. Focus group participants referred to strengthening the local democratic process through various forms of electoral reform. For example, introducing the ward system was suggested in Saint John so that poorer parts of the community would be assured of representation on City Council. Awarding the municipal franchise to newcomers who are local residents as a form of "civic citizenship" was discussed as a possibility in Toronto community feedback sessions.

Focus group participants generally recognized that revitalization of the democratic culture at the local level would depend on encouraging the participation of the full diversity of the community with special efforts and supports to include those traditionally excluded (e.g. youth, ethno-cultural minorities, newcomers, etc.)

Civic Engagement of Youth

"Youth engagement requires special skill sets to step away from bureaucratic level and break down the gap between "grown-ups" and us – youth need it demonstrated they can make a difference and their participation is genuinely valued." (Vancouver participant)

"We don't work with youth very well so that by the time they are old enough to vote, they know very little about municipal government. We teach them about federal and provincial politics but not about municipal. We don't teach them how the mayor and council work." (Saint John participant)

"Youth are welcome if they are part of a program or an initiative, but if they are just hanging around they are not welcomed. Most of the time the community hall is closed so they congregate in the mall." (Edmonton participant)

"Voting doesn't really affect us because it doesn't matter who wins – they [politicians and government decision-makers] don't listen to us."
(Youth participant in Burlington local sounding)

The inclusion of youth was a major concern in all the participating cities. Children and youth are seen as the natural beneficiaries of affordable early childhood development programs and good schools. But income supports, employment, affordable housing, and community services to disadvantaged families were also

identified as important to the healthy development of children and youth. Beyond educational and service supports, however, community focus group participants in all six cities felt that more action was needed to involve youth in civic and community affairs. Ideas for youth engagement strategies ranged from lowering the age qualification for the municipal vote to more coordinated approaches between the municipality and the school system on civics education. This is one area of local responsibility where municipalities and communities can take the initiative without needing to depend on action or support from other levels of government.

Civic Citizenship and the Public Education System

"The ideology of the day is that education is about employment. if you can convince government that it gets people off welfare, you can get funding." (Edmonton participant)

"We need to re-open our schools up. This idea of kids per square footage is worth so much is nonsense." (Toronto prticipant)

"Teachers have been under attack, creating a decline in morale which spreads like a cancer throughout the school." (Burlington participant)

"There are some incredibly wonderful things going on – many of these wonderful programs are highly in danger." (Vancouver participant)

"Millions go into the schools but lights out at 3:30." (Saint John participant)

Related to the previous point, participants in all the ICC cities commonly recognize that a strong public school system is critically important to the future of Canada's children and youth. Despite funding cutbacks in education in recent years, government educational philosophies emphasizing schooling primarily for the job market, and threats of fragmenting the school system via privatization, there is a general sense that, although weakened, the central core of the public education system has held. In most communities, however, the public school system's capacity needs strengthening, especially since a more diverse student population is presenting itself in city schools.

Participants in community focus groups and local soundings and feedback sessions across all cities consistently saw the public school as an institution central not only to the well-being of their children but to their communities as well. Their discussion on human development as an inclusion dimension articulated the following compelling and coherent vision of what constitutes an inclusive public education system:

- Pursuing the primary mission of creating graduates who are "civic citizens" prepared to make their contribution to the community and Canada, socially, culturally and politically as well as economically.

- Blending the common core values of the society with respect for the requirements of the wide diversity within it in both what is taught and how it is taught.

- Grounded in the notion of the school in and of the community and available to the community for multiple uses.

- Connecting seamlessly with the child and family as they enter the school years and as the young graduate moves on to further educational or work pursuits.

- Engaging actively parents in the life of the community school and the education of their children.

Public Commitment to Developmental Growth from the Early Years

"*There is a generally accepted ideology that children are basically the responsibility of parents. The provincial government still thinks women should stay home and don't value the contribution that women make to the economy." (Edmonton participant)*

"The pre-school system is pretty good. It's the people who are not in, whose needs are not being addressed, that's the issue." (Vancouver participant)

"Daycares are not required to take children with special needs. They can refuse applicants." (Saint John participant)

"Quality is high but affordability is low." (Burlington participant)

Across the country the belief in the value and importance of high quality early child development programs is strong. Community leadership and dedicated staff have demonstrated how to develop and deliver high quality childcare and other family and children's resource programs despite funding constraints. This is not sustainable as low pay, poor working conditions, and lack of professional development opportunities threaten the ability to maintain quality early childhood programming.

Access to child care is also highly inequitable mostly for affordability reasons. Long waiting lists and inadequate subsidies mean low-income families, especially modest income and working poor families and single parent families, are denied access. In addition, poor outreach and support to newcomers and families with children with special needs present further barriers.

Increasingly, universally accessible early child development programs are seen as critical not just as a support to individual families but as an issue of early growth and development for the well-being of children and the quality of the Canada's future human resource base.

Community Safety Beyond Policing

"Why are they allowed to do that to us? Who holds the police and 'rent-a-cops' accountable?" (Youth participant in Burlington local sounding)

"We need police that get to know the community and not be seen as just enforcers but rather be part of the community as people who are there to help with what we need." (Toronto participant)

"Economic issues end up in the lap of police who have less capacity to deal with them. . . . There is a lack of capacity on the social side so things end up in the justice system." (Edmonton participant)

"Did snapshot of kids in custody. 85% said they got in trouble because they were not involved in anything, they were bored." (Saint John participant)

"A woman in a wheelchair cannot leave her front entrance because of the steps there, so she uses the back exit which goes into an alley. She is however afraid to use that exit at night so finds herself staying at home at nights." (Vancouver participant)

"Seniors perceive whatever is happening in Vancouver will happen here. . . . The more we build communities where people know each other [the better]"*." (North Vancouver participant)*

There were strong feelings among community focus group and local sounding participants about community safety. Much of this feeling had to do with policing and a sense that police did not treat some groups equitably, youth and racial-cultural minorities in particular. Participants in several communities, Vancouver/North Vancouver and Saint John did acknowledge that police were making greater efforts to improve their relations with youth and other groups. Burlington participants gave the police a ringing endorsement in this regard. In general, focus group participants recognized that senior police command had adopted more explicit policy on equity and respect for diversity in police services. Still, in many cases this had not translated into consistent police practice in the street.

There is a need to re-negotiate the police-community relationship in order to establish trust and understanding and to set clear expectations about equitable treatment for all as well as police accountability to civilian authority. Negotiating

a new relationship will require mutual commitment and patience on the part of both the police and the community, especially in those urban areas where there have been particularly difficult relationships up to now.

Focus group participants, however, recognized that the issue of community safety too often focuses primarily on perceptions about crime levels, concerns about police behaviour, and media images about certain "unsafe" neighbourhoods. Other community safety issues such as safe access to public places for seniors, people with disabilities, women and children get less public attention.

An inclusive approach to community safety needs to encompass a broader perspective such as street lighting, volume and speed of vehicular traffic, built-urban form that encourages social interaction ("eyes on the street"). It needs to be more proactive and preventive and encompass more than police-community relations. More collaborative models of community policing should also extend to more responsibility for all community residents and groups to ensure that everyone feels safe and secure in any neighbourhoods and throughout the entire city.

Failure of Market Model to Create Growth with Equity

"To say there are vacant units in the city is like walking into a grocery store and saying, 'There is no hunger in the city, look at all the food'."(Toronto participant)

"Burlington is a terrible place to be poor." (Burlington participant)

"Sustainability of employment is so critical for inclusion – sustainable in the sense it pays a living wage, has some benefits, and is stable - not month to month, or even year to year." (Edmonton participant)

"I think you are going to see rents increase over next five years. This is not good. How do you make affordable housing? Rents yes, but also look at the income that people are making." (Saint John participant)

"If we had an inclusion policy, before we make public policy or decisions, we had to look at policy and ask 'how does it effect people in poverty'? . . . Why is that lens not there when people are making these decisions?" (Saint John participant)

"Growing gap even for middle income peoples. People are living in leaky moldy places. Gap between the wealthy who can afford high priced housing and those who are low income . . . but also those with middle income who can't afford housing here." (North Vancouver participant)

In all the communities, focus group and local soundings participants consistently rated living conditions as the least inclusive dimension of all. They identified growing disparities in income, employment and housing as the major divisive forces within their communities, especially affecting certain groups such as newcomers, youth, racial minorities, Aboriginal people and young families.

Many participants recognized that the future economic prosperity of their cities and the country rests on investing and developing these very same human resources so that the whole population shares a stake in their inclusion. This recognition was expressed most frequently with respect to concerns that immigrants be better supported in settlement so that they do not give up on Canada and return to their native lands and that youth receive the support they need so that they choose to stay in their communities rather than look elsewhere in Canada or globally for economic opportunity.

Participants were aware that the world has changed and become more internationally competitive. They felt, however, that too much essential social infrastructure has been sacrificed to the belief that only growth in the market economy, low taxation, and reduced public services will produce economic prosperity. The failure of this formula is reflected in increasing inequities in income, erosion of decent jobs in terms of permanent employment, decent wages and adequate benefits, and lack of affordable and safe housing for all community members. Participants also realize that it is municipalities and community-based organizations that are contending with the realities of this growing polarization within Canadian urban communities, since the provincial and federal governments have downloaded responsibilities without sufficient resources for social and economic supports to the local level.

Arts, Recreation and Cultural Acivity as Integral to Vital Civic Life

"Many people won't find success in work or school setting but may excel and be able to participate/contribute in an arts or recreational setting. It's an impoverishment for society when we don't allow their capabilities to be developed." (Edmonton participant)

"Officials need to put more value in recreation – the hot campaign topic is not recreation but sewers, water, roads." (Saint John participant)

"Culture is always the first to be 'axed'." (Saint John participant)

"People from lower incomes are not participating; we are working on strategies to reach unemployed youth; many seniors are too proud to ask for a subsidy."

(North Vancouver participant)

"Stuff is expensive – everything costs money. The punk show is reasonable." (Burlington Youth participant)

Across all participating communities, arts, recreation and cultural programming are highly valued as major contributors to the quality of community life for all residents. The benefits vary by population sub-group:

- seniors avoid isolation within the community through access to arts, cultural and recreation programs, both as users and as volunteers;
- people with disabilities can become more engaged in community life through such activities;
- newcomers can both make helpful connections with others through arts and recreational opportunities and also share their own cultural heritage through multi-cultural festivals and events; and
- children and youth can develop their talents, skills and abilities in both formal arts and recreation programs and informal activities.

The potential for promoting human development, social interaction, and community inclusiveness through stimulating community arts, recreational and cultural programs is well recognized. As well, this is seen as a natural area for strong municipal and community collaboration.

Most research participants acknowledged, however, that there were still issues of accessibility for some groups to the arts, recreational and cultural life of the community. Barriers identified included:

- cost, specifically user fees for many activities, and lack of subsidies for individuals and families on low incomes;
- lack of availability of community space, especially for less formal programming and leisure activities; and
- transportation issues again related to the cost of transit fares but also to the lack of public transit coverage for people living at some distance from arts and recreational venues.

As well, there was growing recognition that as Canada's urban communities become more diverse, there must be greater sensitivity, inclusiveness and responsiveness in the programming developed and provided and in the outreach to new communities to encouragement participation.

Community-based Agencies as an Essential Part of Civic Social Infrastructure

"Mandates are stretched, especially when other organizations go under."(Burlington participant)

"Advocacy is a dangerous word – immigrant serving agencies are told they are not permitted to advocate, so they only now get to network." (Vancouver participant)

"What percentage of our taxes is the provincial government using up without providing a service. If I knew that my taxes were going to provide services, I wouldn't mind that." (Saint John participant)

"Funders need to provide core funding rather than project funding – and it is going the other way with the outcomes based stuff; as opposed to giving people money to build and organize their own organization – that makes them sustainable. Projects end." (Edmonton participant)

The downloading of the last decade or more did not just place a greater burden on municipalities but also on community organizations and support groups in the non-profit sector. This occurred at the same time that the funding relationship of the community sector started to change significantly. Funders, including provincial and federal governments, began withdrawing from funding community groups for basic operational capacity (i.e. core funding) and shifted to funding for programs targeted to specific groups with narrowly defined needs. Funding patterns forced the community-based sector to concentrate on service delivery for more marginalized populations frequently for crisis relief. The sector's capacity for work on prevention, community development, or civic engagement was reduced. In all cities, focus group participants also pointed out that both funding criteria and regulatory restrictions placed a chill on the community sector's advocacy activity.

Focus group participants in all cities argued that governments at all levels should recognize and support the role of the non-profit community-based sector in promoting social harmony and active civic engagement in addition to providing important community services. The community sector was considered an essential part of social infrastructure requiring stable and secure core funding. As well, the role of the sector in promoting voluntarism and advocacy should be seen as contributing in an important way to civic engagement and participation in the democratic process. These are particularly important integrative functions of the community sector for certain populations such as youth and newcomers to the country.

Focus group participants also felt that the community-based sector had to show better performance in some areas such as more inclusive, responsive and innovative outreach to the whole community to engage and involve groups such as youth and immigrants. They also felt it important to support unorganized communities to get access to resources to develop their own community organizations.

Public Places and Spaces to Promote Social Interaction

"If we could truly make schools a community centre, we would have senior's clubs there, free meeting space, go there to have blood test instead of way out to hospital." (Saint John participant)

"Schools are seen as owned by the school board and not seen as community buildings." (Edmonton participant)

"There's not enough hanging out space – so youth use the malls." (Vancouver participant)

"Cost is the most significant barrier to public space." (Burlington participant)

"User fees close the door on newcomer immigrant groups organizing, coming together, and meeting." (Toronto participant)

Focus group participants in all cities felt that policies, programs, and practices that encourage and promote social interaction among diverse populations served to counter inter-generational divides, economic inequities, barriers to physical access, and ethno-cultural and racial stereotyping. Therefore, the existence of a healthy and accessible stock of public places and spaces in urban communities is a valuable physical resource.

There was also a heightened awareness of the value of multiple uses of public facilities for a variety of community purposes and uses, which promote inclusive communities. Places like community centers, libraries, and well-kept public parks were identified as examples, but most consistently across all the cities, research participants saw the local school as the prime example of a public facility for wide-ranging community uses beyond just schooling their children.

Cultural Sensitivity to Community Service Delivery

"Question: Do newcomers have access to . . . appropriately trained and culturally sensitive staff? Answer: What planet are you living on?"
(Burlington participant)

"The North Shore does not always have the resources to deal with [diversity in healthcare] issues. It's a growing problem with more diversity in the region."

(North Vancouver participant)

"Limited capacity to respond to 'foreigners' [in crisis]." (Saint John participant)

"But culturally sensitive is considered nice to have, instead of critical to have, so it is not the norm and funding is hard to get. On the up-side, it is becoming more recognized and we are becoming more responsive to cultural diversities." (Edmonton participant)

Sensitivity to culturally appropriate and responsive human services started to increase in Canadian cities about two decades ago as their populations grew with the arrival of new immigrants in large numbers from non-European sources. Equity policies and settlement support programs, though, were among the first to suffer when funding cutbacks and fiscal restraint became the order of the day in the 1990s. As a result, even in very racially and culturally diverse centres such as Toronto and Vancouver, there is still an unacceptable gap between the policy and practice of providing culturally responsive health and social services.

Notably, focus group participants in the more culturally homogeneous communities of Saint John and Burlington recognized and welcomed the increasing cultural diversity within their populations, but expressed concern about being adequately prepared to develop and adapt their service systems accordingly. In Edmonton, the challenge is both to respond to the needs of growing immigration as well as more culturally diverse migration from other parts of Canada and a rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population as more people wish to share and contribute to Alberta's economic prosperity.

The challenges facing both the municipal and community service sectors extend far beyond their own existing resource bases. Provincial and federal governments must provide support. As well, some focus group participants expected the federal government to have a more conscious urban strategy, which coordinated more effectively its immigration policy and its settlement support policy and programs as well as assisting Aboriginal people to make successful transitions from rural to urban communities.

Urban Mobility as an Important Inclusion Issue

"Pedestrians are not #1 like the City of Vancouver policy states." (Vancouver participant)

"A disabled person couldn't come [to the focus group] today because she couldn't get DATS [Disabled Adult Transit Service], so the availability of transportation is still an issue." (Edmonton participant)

"People in Kennebecasis Valley have moved into Saint John so that they can use the bus." (Saint John participant)

"The poor and marginalized use public transportation. There's a difference in service for the 'deserving', such as seniors, who are somewhat served, and the 'undeserving'" (Burlington participant)

“They integrate the subways with elevators, but the month has thirty days and the elevators don’t work for twenty-eight.” (Toronto participant with disability)

Focus group participants in all cities saw mobility and accessible transportation within urban communities as a major inclusion issue. Although the particular barriers varied somewhat, the affordability of transit fares for people on low incomes was identified as an issue in all communities. In Saint John inadequate route coverage also presents problems for people living in more outlying poorer neighbourhoods. In Burlington the automobile rules, and the use of public transit is a bit of a mark of an economic divide. In Toronto, a basically good public transit system was criticized for occasional shortcomings in the quality of staff interaction with the public, especially certain groups such as youth and newcomers.

Focus group participants did acknowledge that their municipal governments had made efforts to provide special public transit for seniors and people with disabilities, although problems remain with the flexibility and timeliness of current systems. It was clear that barriers to mobility within the urban community interfere with a person’s ability to fully experience and participate in community life in very important areas such as employment, access to healthcare and civic engagement. The main mobility differential appears to be access to an automobile and the income level necessary to support this expensive and private mode of transportation. Adequately subsidized public transportation systems that keep fares low, provide good geographic coverage with regular routes and reliable schedules, and accommodate seniors and people with disabilities would be the great equalizer in this regard. Further, as private car travel becomes more expensive in the future, good public transit systems promise to become the common mode of getting around the city for everyone.

Section 3 Building a New Canada: Challenges and Priorities

3.1 Context

The Inclusive Cities Canada initiative provides an important opportunity to hear civic voices from five urban communities in different parts of the country on the social health of major Canadian cities. The ICC initiative has captured the perspectives of community leaders, committed volunteers, front-line service workers, municipal officials, and expert contributors who participated in focus groups and soundings in their respective communities. The ICC National Symposium in Ottawa on November 27 and 28, 2005 is an occasion for local participants to begin a national dialogue across cities on the future of their communities and their country.

There is a growing recognition that Canada has become an urban nation. Nearly 80% of Canadians live in large, medium, and small municipalities that span the country. Four large urban regions centered around Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary-Edmonton now contain 51% of the Canadian population. Cities are major contributors to the wealth of the country, and to the revenue base of senior governments. Urban areas are centers of high value added production, essential to Canada's ability to succeed in global trade.

Canadian cities are facing significant social changes. Each year Canada receives over 225,000 newcomers from every part of the world, of which 75% first settle in large urban regions. In recent decades, there has been a significant movement of aboriginal peoples from First Nation territories into cities. Disinvestment by senior governments in social housing have created conditions of homelessness and dislocation in cities. Chronically high levels of child and family poverty contribute to urban neighbourhoods of disadvantage. Alienated youth in large cities with limited pathways to opportunity turn to drugs and violent crime which heightens everyone's sense of insecurity. Social disparities between areas of advantage and neighbourhoods of disadvantage are becoming more pronounced, with evidence in large cities of potentially dangerous racial divisions in the quality of urban life.

The civic focus on social inclusion reflects the recognition that it is within larger cities that a new Canada is being created and experienced. An inclusive Canada will be grounded in cities that reduce economic disparities, value cultural differences, affirm shared values, sustain common institutions, engage all residents, promote community initiatives, and strengthen mutual trust. Current public policy literature focuses on the significance of place in national responses to globalization. There is a new optimism that countries can pursue both social equity and economic efficiency if domestic states of cohesion are strong. National cohesion is nurtured in the solidarities of civic communities.

The social fabric of cities is fragile. Persistent disparity of opportunities and chronic ethno-racial discrimination can erupt into civic rage, evident recently in the suburbs

of Paris. Weak public infrastructures, depleted through decades of disinvestment, can lead to the civic abandonment of the most vulnerable as witnessed in News Orleans during the Katrina tragedy. Cities of solitudes can contribute to the creation of divided countries.

The five sites in the ICC initiative reflect the new Canada. Four cities - Vancouver/North Vancouver, Edmonton, City of Toronto, Burlington [Greater Toronto Area] - are located within the largest urban regions of the country. The fifth city, Saint John [New Brunswick], is beginning to experience the social challenges of inclusion and provides a glimpse of an urban community in transition.

Each city is a microcosm of broader conditions and challenges within Canada. In all cities, the deterioration and disparity of living conditions is perceived by respondents as the greatest threat to inclusion. This is the legacy of economic and fiscal strategies which have led to growth without equity. Cities are contending with common and distinct challenges of addressing diversity - respecting the historic status and civic requirements of urban Aboriginal peoples [Edmonton, Vancouver], supporting immigrants and refugees [Toronto, Vancouver], sustaining racial diversity in population growth [Burlington], making their city more attractive to immigrant settlement [Saint John]. All cities are struggling with ways to engage youth in civic life, strengthen public schools as community places of inclusion, extend opportunities for early learning/child care and recreation/arts experiences, secure funding for the essential work of community-based agencies, ensure extended mobility within and across urban regions, promote active resident participation in local governance, develop collaborative models for community safety.

The work of the civic panels brought an innovative approach to policy development. Each panel was co-chaired by a senior municipal official and a senior community leader. Panel members were from diverse civic sectors and cultural backgrounds. They brought informed and committed perspectives to their recommendations. The panels demonstrated that civic leaders from different regions of Canada shared many common concerns, and proposed a wide range of complementary priorities in their reports.

The promise of the civic panels is that national perspectives and priorities on important issues can be initiated from the ground up and developed horizontally across civic communities. This is the model for a civic-grounded federalism in which people and communities increasingly inform federal and provincial priorities through their participation in local life. The well-being of Canadians would be promoted through developing stronger capacities within all municipal governments to monitor the social health of their cities and thereby serve as stewards of the nation in their communities. Local coalitions and cross Canada alliances could strengthen community capacities to advance civic-focused priorities with senior governments.

3.2 Challenges

The civic capacity of large and small municipalities to sustain productive communities of social and cultural diversity living in states of relative harmony is a fundamental challenge to the future of Canada. It is within cities and urban regions that the character of the new Canada will be shaped. Canada attracts people from every part of the world who come with their families and talents to live, work, and enrich our communities. Social inclusion then is a promise of common membership and equal opportunity.

A focus on inclusion sets a high standard for meeting the promise of Canada. It starts with building cities which value human dignity, welcome civic proximity, and respect social diversity. ICC civic panels have struggled with how to promote inclusion in their communities. Each panel has issued local reports with recommendations which address issues of inclusion in their communities. While the recommendations are city specific, the local reports reveal four central challenges common across the five cities. The challenges are to make local democracy work, affirm urban diversity, reduce disparities in living conditions, and invest in social infrastructures. Together, these challenges highlight the content of a serious social agenda for cities with priorities for action at the civic, federal, and provincial levels. Embedded within each challenge is a national mission whose pursuit and realization can help redeem the promise of Canada.

Challenge One - Make Local Democracy Work
Mission - Promote Civic Citizenship

Civic panels expressed high levels of commitment to the significance of local governments as critical foundations for promoting democratic experiences among all segments of the population. It is within civic communities that people experience the presence of public institutions in their daily lives [schools, hospitals, police], the scope of social and economic opportunities which may be available, templates of transparency and integrity in processes of local governance, the formation of alliances in areas of common interest, and practices of negotiation and accommodation in the resolution of differences.

The concept of civic citizenship means recognizing all adult residents of the municipal community as active participants in local governance, with contributions to make and responsibilities to assume as full members. Local democracy is where preparation for the responsibilities of national and global citizenship can be cultivated. In a country of growing diversity, local democracy can nurture formative experiences of cohesion and solidarity. Cities are also places where people can meet and struggle with how to respond to disparities created by forces of globalization. Civic initiatives can help create social and economic conditions for all community members to thrive.

ICC civic panels concluded that measures to promote active engagement in civic life should become a common Canadian priority. There were strong concerns to ensure that youth, as the next generation of civic leaders, overcome prevailing cynicism about the relevance of the democratic process. Early experiences of civic responsibility should be part of the transition to adulthood. Similarly, immigrant and refugee newcomers should be encouraged to become fully engaged in local governance as part of the settlement process and exposure to the democratic process of Canadian life. Canadian democracy is strengthened when civic communities demonstrate their commitment to hear and value all voices through open governance.

The dominant focus of civic panel recommendations to make local democracy work are as follows:

- explore ways cities can extend engagement through use of civic assemblies, community councils, and neighbourhoods settings to inform, consult and report [Burlington, Toronto]
- establish an independent inclusion office to promote civic engagement and leadership development [Edmonton]
- establish a municipal task force to strengthen inclusion strategies for local governance [Saint John]
- develop a "population matrix' / an 'inclusion lens' to ensure that local governments consult with a full range of people on issues of public significance [Vancouver, Burlington]
- extend the municipal franchise to all adult residents including newcomers who have yet to acquire national citizenship [Toronto]
- establish youth cabinets and panels to strengthen the input of young people in local governance [Saint John, Toronto]
- evaluate and enhance the civics curriculum as vehicles for enhancing student engagement in local political processes[Burlington]
- introduce the municipal franchise at age 16 when young people are still in school and can enhance their civic learning and experience the social significance of voting [Toronto].

Challenge Two - Affirm Urban Diversity
Mission - Secure Human Dignity

Large cities are the critical places where Canada will either succeed or fail in living with diversities. Canadian cities share a common range of diversities based on linguistic, gender, developmental, religious, aboriginal, newcomer, ethno-racial, and orientation differences. The common presence of these differences means that all cities have to become places which can welcome and value many forms of diversity whatever the intensity or scale of that presence. While more immigrants and refugees come to Toronto, Edmonton must become a place that can also support newcomers albeit for smaller numbers. Similarly, while there is a proportionately large group of Aboriginal peoples who have settled in Edmonton,

there are large numbers of Aboriginal peoples living in Toronto. Both cities have a stake in the elaboration of urban Aboriginal strategies based on shared sovereignty and mutual respect.

Social inclusion, while compelling in intent, is a complex and contested concept. What appears to have self-evident meaning can conceal layers of conflicting assumptions. At the core of inclusion objectives are issues of who is to be included in what. Inclusion can mean integration and assimilation, in which outsiders are accepted if they live within the normative frameworks of dominant insiders. Inclusion under conditions of diversity can also mean that we have to go through a process of civic renewal in which we learn to recognize and respect differences at the same time as we struggle to discover and sustain commonalities. The outcome of this renewal can be cities of mutual affirmation where civic institutions are pluralized into places that reflect everyone and belong to everyone.

Proposals from the ICC panels reveal a strong commitment to affirm urban diversity through the renewal of institutions. The dominant focus of 7recommendations are as follows:

- municipalities should actively monitor and profile social changes in their urban populations [Burlington]
- cultural competence training should be provided to elected officials, municipal staff, and public service providers [Burlington, Saint John]
- leadership equity strategies should be mandated by public and voluntary authorities to ensure that senior management and professional positions in institutions and agencies better reflect urban diversities [Toronto]
- greater funding support and collaboration is required from provincial and federal governments to improve immigrant settlement resources [Burlington, Toronto, Vancouver]
- schools should become hubs for their communities and welcoming places in which a culture of inclusion is reflected in the curriculum and the classroom [Edmonton, Toronto, Vancouver]
- collaborative models of policing that improve relations with minorities and strengthen community capacities and resources for safety are essential [Edmonton, Toronto
- support of artists from different cultures and encouragement of cross-cultural diversity events promote civic awareness and understanding [Edmonton, Vancouver]

Challenge Three - Reduce Disparities in Living Conditions
Mission - Create Common Prosperity

Economic and fiscal strategies during the last decade have failed to benefit all residents in Canadian cities. Chronic levels of adult and child poverty, limited employment opportunities, low wage jobs, unaffordable and inadequate housing are serious threats to the social cohesion of cities. When neighbourhood

concentrations of disadvantage grow, residential patterns of stigma and separation emerge. This is particularly evident when disadvantage disproportionately impacts urban residents of Aboriginal origin, racial minorities, and recent immigrants and refugees. Experience in the United States should make it abundantly clear how readily cultural and moral deficiencies can be assigned to the disadvantaged, who are then perceived as civic risks unworthy of proximity and inclusion.

The social health of Canadian cities requires a serious commitment from all levels of government to diminish urban disparities through strategies which create common prosperity. There is a new international intelligence, as reported recently by UNICEF and the World Economic Forum, which contends that public investments in human development, advanced research, and civic infrastructures can generate globally competitive clusters of place-centered assets for high value added production. Inclusive pathways to prosperity can be sustained through strategies of smart taxation which advance both social equity and economic efficiency.

ICC panels were deeply concerned about the impacts of disparities in their cities, and proposed a wide range of public measures to create more inclusive living conditions:

- municipal governments should become strong advocates for initiatives and strategies which address poverty, promote good jobs and living wages, advance gender equity in employment, improve working conditions, encourage local apprenticeships and training, develop plans to deal with homelessness [Burlington, Edmonton, Saint John, Toronto, Vancouver]
- provinces must regularly review and adjust minimum wages to ensure that earnings provide for basic adult needs [Burlington, Vancouver]
- provinces should adopt the Market Basket Measure of low income [MBM] as the public standard to set minimum wage and social assistance levels [Edmonton]
- local governments should actively promote diverse forms of housing in mixed income neighbourhoods, with designs fully accessible to people with physical disabilities [Edmonton, Toronto]
- national funding for high quality and culturally sensitive licensed child care is essential to sustain employment opportunities for parents and promote the early learning and healthy development of all children [Burlington, Vancouver]

Challenge Four - Invest in Social Infrastructures
Mission - Build Strong Communities

It is generally understood that cities require infrastructure in order to function. This is because cities are multi-purpose environments of settlement and activity for which basic sustaining assets are required. Traditional understandings of infrastructure focus on assets such as water, roads, transit, ports, utilities, fire,

police, hospitals, parks, schools, libraries, and shelter. Less understood are the requirement for a full range of civic assets which can sustain the social well-being of diverse communities and people.

Inclusive cities foster a sense of belonging through opportunities for affiliation and contribution in communities of local significance. Local communities can be based on a wide range of affinities- residential (e.g. neighbourhoods, districts), cultural (religious, ethno-national, artistic), institutional (related to learning, health, justice) and economic (corporate, professional entrepreneurial). Social capital can be generated when there are diverse opportunities for affiliation across horizontal networks of reciprocity and trust.

A focus on social infrastructure compels us to look at the civic resources required to care for and connect people of diverse backgrounds who share common local environments. ICC panels were quite clear on what these requirements were:

- senior governments must recognize that community-based agencies and coalitions are essential civic resources and require stable core funding to meet their responsibilities [Burlington, Saint John, Toronto]
- ensure that the most vulnerable are not denied access to recreation, arts, and service programs through user fees [Edmonton, Toronto, Vancouver]
- ensure that public spaces are preserved as welcoming civic places to people of all backgrounds and are not used for commercial advertising or corporate branding [Edmonton, Vancouver]
- public funding should be provided to extend access to public transit within local areas and across urban regions [Burlington, Edmonton, Toronto, Vancouver]
- fill gaps in crisis services to include 24/7 emergency response capacities for people with mental illness [Burlington, Toronto, Vancouver]
- make resources available in local communities to strengthen volunteer skills, provide tools for advocacy [Vancouver]
- public funding is required for school-community workers to support parents of diverse cultural backgrounds in becoming active contributors to the learning of their children [Toronto]

3.3 Priorities for Action

The national symposium is an opportunity to identify what should be expected from different levels of engagement and governance in building inclusive cities and urban communities. Some preliminary observations can be offered.

Civic Initiatives

ICC panels have developed networks and knowledge on the differing dimensions of social inclusion. How to build upon these achievements is a challenge for panels. Some directions to explore might include:

- finding ways to continue and extend the work of civic panels through new regional initiatives
- working with municipalities and regions to develop working models to monitor and promote inclusion objectives
- creating lead models within public institutions and projects to demonstrate how approaches to inclusion can be introduced on the ground.

Federal Leadership

The New Deal for Cities should explicitly affirm the importance of social infrastructures in urban communities and contribute to the recognitions of this priority through the elaboration of a preliminary strategy for cross Canada research and development. At present, a number of federal departments are pursuing discreet community-based initiatives in their fields. Each area of discreet federal initiative has significance to a department's area of particular responsibility. However, a host of discreet community projects do not in themselves lead to strong social infrastructures in cities.

The time may have come for the federal government to consolidate their community contributions into a strategy which generates broader learnings on the development of civic capacities for building strong social infrastructures. These learnings could include the development of indicators, models, and tools drawn from the work of community projects, the transfer of learning and approaches across urban communities, the generation of working papers on priority issues of national significance, and the creation of consolidated funding models to jointly or directly support important municipal advances in social infrastructure development.

Provincial Responsibilities

Provinces have important roles to assume in building inclusive cities. They can enhance municipal capacities through examining ways to overcome fragmentation in local authorities which become barriers to reviewing and acting upon civic dimensions of inclusion. Provinces can work with municipalities to affirm what are

essential services in urban communities, and how municipalities can be assured of the resources required to make these services available as required. Constitutional barriers which limit direct national relationships of cities to each other and to the federal government can be lowered.

It is becoming clear in the sophistication and substance of ICC panel work that municipal officials and civic leaders are increasingly formative sources of social intelligence that can shape standards and directions for public institutions in the new Canada. Municipalities draw their enhanced social significance from closer states of proximity with the daily life situations of people and communities, and from greater transparency and engagement in governance. Community-based agencies and coalitions are important sources of direct knowledge drawn from the diversities of their settings. Provinces should seek to strengthen municipal capacities as partners in shared responsibilities, with a respect similar to what provinces expect in their relations with then federal government.